

REMARKS

The specification has been amended as needed.

The claims have also been amended so as to sharpen the definition of the invention over the applied references.

Reconsideration is accordingly respectfully requested, for the rejection of the claims as anticipated by or unpatentable over UHL et al., alone or in view of BYRD, JR. et al.

UHL et al. disclose a method and device for the online processing of mail items to be forwarded. In the employed method, an image of a mail item is taken and stored after which interesting information within that image is determined. The interesting information includes names and addresses of recipients, forwarding instructions, and, in the case of a return notation by a delivery person, a sender address. The information is checked against a name address data bank, and if there is no correspondence, it is checked against a forwarding data bank.

If the information is not read clearly automatically, one or more additional, increasingly more precise video coding systems are employed to read the information (e.g., abstract and column 4, lines 19-21).

The name address data bank, also referred to as dictionary, contains all address information up to the individual delivery locations (column 5, lines 52-53). The forwarding data bank contains a complete list of persons associated with a delivery location (column 6, lines 3-5). Moreover, both the

dictionary and the forwarding data bank comprise all possible, correct and different spellings of the addresses (column 5, lines 59-61).

When the name of the recipient is found, possible advance instructions are considered during the subsequent step, e.g., sorting and distributing. To enable the sender to update his/her address list, a report comprising the address change can be sent (column 6, lines 53-58).

With the invention of UHL et al., the recognition of postal addresses is improved.

In contrast, the present invention does not relate to a method and/or device to improve the recognition of postal addresses. It relates to an installation and a method for updating an address database with recorded address records.

Note that, although mentioned in the Official Action, the quoted text segments of UHL et al., i.e., column 5, lines 50-62, column 5, lines 13-19 and abstract, do not disclose anything about "updating" at all. In UHL et al., the address data are predetermined, i.e., they are recorded in a forwarding data base. For this purpose, an address change system 214 determines the target address. "If the mail is to be forwarded", this is thus known by the system in advance, "the target address is the new address of the recipient. For a return, the address of the sender is the target address" (column 5, lines 8-10). The address change system 214 thus only determines the target address

for the mail to be checked based on external signals (see e.g., Figure 1).

However, as was realized by the inventors of the present invention, a predetermined list of address data is incomplete. For instance, as is mentioned in the description of the present invention, many people move without informing the postal delivery services about their new home address. However, if they do inform their friends and relatives, the use of the present invention recognizes that a person has moved.

As compared to UHL et al., the present invention comprises a database memory with data records that can be updated as a result of the recording of address data shown on items of post. Whether the record is removed, altered, marked or the like depends on the quality rating, which indicates how good the address data are. In other words, not the quality of the characters and/or symbols on the postal item, but the credibility of the difference between recorded address data and address data in the database memory is relevant. The quality rating is used to determine what actions should be performed with the address data record stored in the database memory and what instructions should be printed on the postal item for further processing, i.e., sorting and distribution. A problem as introduced in column 9, lines 6-24 of UHL et al. can thus be solved by the present invention without the delivery person.

Since UHL et al. do not disclose the updating of address data in a database, and moreover do not disclose the use of quality rating on the basis of predefined criteria to compare the address data with the address records stored in such a database, the present invention as defined by claim 1 is believed to be unobvious.

Additionally, since UHL et al. disclose a complete database, and the present invention in contrast is aware of the fact that its database is incomplete, it is believed that the present invention as claimed in independent claims 1 and 13 is unobvious in view of UHL et al.

To emphasize the aforementioned difference between UHL et al. and the present invention, independent claims 1 and 13 are amended. A basis for the definition of quality rating can be found on page 3, lines 29-30 in the description of the application.

Since claims 2-4, 12, 14-16, and 24 depend on independent claims 1 and 13, respectively, it is believed that these claims are also unobvious in view of UHL et al.

Furthermore, although mentioned in the Official Action, UHL et al. do not disclose the content of claims 11 and 23. The cited passage (column 10, lines 52-59) does not even give a hint that the address database is stored with security. To further emphasize this difference, claims 11 and 23 are amended to claim that the data stored in the central database can be accessed via

a secure output routine. A basis for this addition can be found on page 14, lines 12-13 in the description of the application. Since the content of claims 11 and 23 is not mentioned in UHL et al., and additionally, these claims depend on independent claims 1 and 13, respectively, it is believed that these claims are unobvious in view of UHL et al.

In the Official Action, it is agreed that claims 5-10 and 17-22 are not disclosed by UHL et al. alone. However, they are said to be unpatentable over UHL et al. in view of BYRD, JR. et al.. Since the aforementioned claims depend directly or indirectly on claims 1 and 13, respectively, they are believed to be unobvious over UHL et al. alone, and thus also unobvious over UHL et al. in view of BYRD, JR. et al.

As the claims as now constituted clearly define the above distinctions with ample precision and definiteness, it is believed that they are all patentable, and reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert J. Patch', written over a horizontal line.

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